

Science

Genre

Magazine Articles present facts and photographs of the people, places, discoveries, and living things being discussed.

Text Feature

Charts show information in columns and rows.

Content Vocabulary

scientific method survey
secure testify

Putting
Together the

PIECES of the PUZZLE

by Eric Michaels



Crime scene investigators are the first people to examine the scene of a crime. They search for clues that will help the detectives later decide what probably happened and who might be responsible for it. It's hard work, but these experts are specially trained. They use the **scientific method**, a series of specific steps, as they work.

Securing the Crime Scene

It is important that nothing be disturbed before an investigation begins. So the first thing a crime scene investigator does is **secure** the crime scene. This protects it from being altered in any way.

The next step is to simply observe. The investigator writes a description of the scene and sketches a floor plan of the scene. Photographs are taken.

Types of Fingerprints



Reading a Chart

Read across each row to learn how common each type of fingerprint is.

Loops



65% of all people

Whorls



30% of all people

Arches



5% of all people

Searching for Evidence

The next step is to search for evidence—physical clues about the crime. This search is done carefully. Hairs and fibers from clothing are gathered. Objects at the scene are dusted with special powder to make any fingerprints show up. Then sticky tape is used to lift the prints off the objects. Fingerprints are important pieces of evidence because they place people at the scene. No two people have the same prints.

Protecting the Evidence

The crime scene investigator must protect evidence as it is gathered. After a piece of evidence is photographed and notes are taken, the evidence is put into a container. It is sealed and labeled to show where it was found. Fingerprints are mounted on cards or special plastic sheets. They will be compared later with those in police records.

After all the evidence is gathered, it's time for a final **survey**, or a last look around. This is to make sure nothing has been overlooked. When the investigator is sure that the search is complete, the crime scene is "released." That means that other people can then enter the area.



Presenting the Findings

A crime scene investigator may help others prepare a court case for the crime. The investigator may also **testify**, or speak about the evidence in court.

Being a crime scene investigator looks exciting on TV. But it takes time, skill, and a lot of scientific knowledge. If a crime scene investigator does the job well, it's likely that the crime will be solved. Then the case can be marked "Closed!"



Connect and Compare



1. Look at the chart on page 39. Which is the most common type of fingerprint? Which type of fingerprint has ridges that rise up in the middle? **Reading a Chart**
2. What information would you use to support the view that a crime scene investigator must be well trained? **Evaluate**
3. Think about this article and "The Mystery of the Missing Lunch." Do you think Ramón would make a good crime scene investigator? Why or why not? **Reading/Writing Across Texts**



Science Activity

Research how to take someone's fingerprints. Then use an ink pad and index cards to collect classmates' fingerprints. Make a chart of the fingerprints.



Find out more about fingerprints at www.macmillanmh.com

Write About a Problem

Writer's Craft

A Good Paragraph

A **good paragraph** has a topic sentence that lets the reader know what you are writing about. The other sentences include details about what happened.



I wrote about a problem and how I solved it. Here's my *topic sentence*.

The other sentences give details about what happened.

What's That Noise?

by Indira S.

Last weekend, all of a sudden, a loud banging woke me up. Thump, thump! I was at Grandma's house in Pennsylvania. I was scared – I thought a bear was trying to get into the house! I thought a light might scare the bear. I put on the lamp, but the thumping got louder.

Then I heard a small woof. I looked over the side of the bed and saw Grandma's dog, Rusty, lying on the floor. The thumping was her tail wagging!

Your Turn

Write a paragraph about a problem you once solved. Be sure to begin your paragraph with a topic sentence that tells what happened. Then include the details of the story in the sentences that follow. Use the Writer's Checklist to check your writing.



Writer's Checklist

- Ideas and Content:** Did I include enough details to tell what happened?
- Organization:** Did I write a **good paragraph** that includes a topic sentence and details about what happened in the following sentences?
- Voice:** Does my personal narrative tell how I felt?
- Word Choice:** Have I chosen the right words to make my story interesting and exciting?
- Sentence Fluency:** Did I use complete sentences?
- Conventions:** Did I use exclamation marks at the end of exclamations?